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Rainbows and Sunsets vs. Forestry

W. C. Hassel

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1913 *Ames Forester*)

You have perhaps read motorcycle advertisements. In each one there is usually a picture of a well dressed young man spinning lightly along the country roads. You imagine yourself in his place. You hear the lowing of the kine, the gurgling of the brooks, catch the fragrant odor of the new mown hay, or if it be in the spring time, of the blossoming trees, as you flit by the farm houses, from town to town, from county to county, from state to state, from—distance is limited only by the fervency of the ad-writer and your own imagination. If you are of a sporting turn of mind, you throw into the picture a race or two with limited trains, in which you tauntingly wave your hand in the engineer's face, put on full speed and leave him to lumber along alone.

To the man who has bought a motorcycle we say "Cheer up" other bubble are bursting daily. We know it was hard to dress like the man in the advertisement, and then to come home with your suit all grease and dust. We know the lowing of the kine and the gurgling of the brooks were drowned out by the hum of your motor. We know that you struck long stretches of sandy road and led your machine through, bucking engine compression until you learned better. We know that the only race you had with a train was the one you had to get out of the way of a freight when your engine died on the crossing. But still we say, "Cheer up, you have company on your ethereal spin." "Who?" He is the rainbow chaser in forester's "togs" who is studying forestry only because he likes birds and animals and flowers and scenery, because he likes to go camping and fishing and hunting and horse-back riding. When he hits his first stretch of sandy road in practical work he is going to break down more dreams, is going to fall harder and feel sorer, than you ever did after a motorcycle trip.

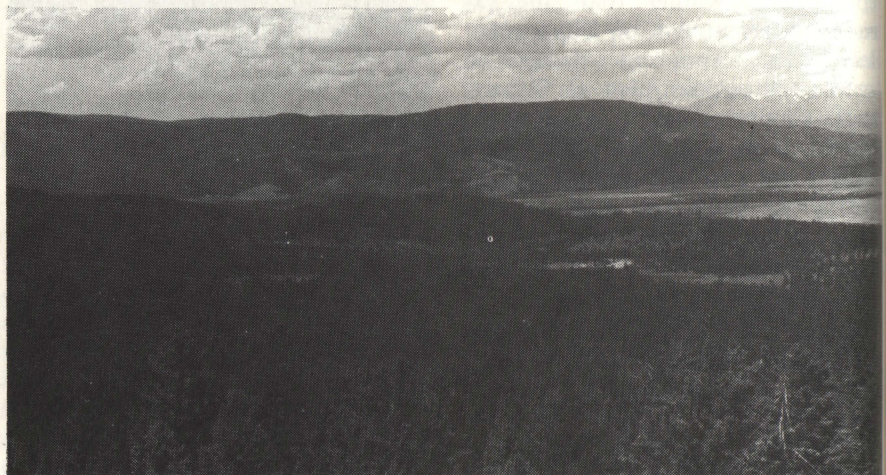
Naturally it is a fine thing for a forester to care for nature, to see

forestry from an aesthetic viewpoint, in fact most every forester is a nature lover. But any man who enters college with the idea that civil engineers have to work in the hot sun on a railroad right-of-way, and electrical engineers have to work in offices, and chemists have to stay in laboratories, and farmers have to plow and milk and feed stock, while a forester rides through cool, shady forests, across purling streams, enjoying the odor of pine needles and the freshness of the mountain air, and only because of this idea takes up the forester's life—Well, that man had better try his motor on a few sandy stretches instead of on macadamized roads, before investing.

Because you had the time of your life the last time you camped out and ate your own cooking, don't imagine that a year's work in the forest is 365 days of picnics. There is a huge satisfaction in cooking one's own meals for two weeks and going home to friends to tell them all about your ability as a cook, but when you have eaten your own cooking for a few months because there is no alternative, the thought of a well cooked meal, served on a table, is not at all repulsive. There are men in the woods this minute who eat but two meals a day, just to avoid eating the third.

It's fine when camping in the mountains to start out in the bracing morning air, carrying one's lunch, to follow some mountain stream to its head, to explore some remote canyon, to walk for miles until you are tired, and then return to camp to rest next day or go fishing. It is somewhat different if you are an embryo forester, and have been called upon to run survey lines over the mountains. You get up at five-thirty, cook breakfast, tie your lunch to your belt, and start out to run more survey lines—lines that don't go around mountains, but over them, that don't follow streams, but cross them. You climb the mountains, wade the streams, and comeback to camp to cook supper and wash the dishes. The next day you don't lie around camp or go fishing, you run more lines.

You probably enjoy snow shoeing. It is great sport if you don't have to do it. When you have a hundred miles to go and it is one of several hundreds that you have gone, the trail appears steeper and the sunset less rosy. Two years ago, on the Wyoming National Forest the supervisor, a forest assistant, a ranger and an old prospector started out on a tour of inspection in the north part of the forest. A deep soft snow fell while they were out, and to make traveling easier they constructed a raft and started down a swift, still unfrozen river. The raft struck a rock and was overturned. Luckily the four men reached the banks, but their outfit was lost, they had no food and no matches. They tramped for miles to a deserted ranger-cabin where they



A beautiful land of rainbows and sunsets in western Montana.

found some wormy rice. They ate this raw for a couple of days, until a crust froze on the snow, then footed it to the nearest occupied cabin.

Very often the solitude of the woods and the occasional lack of companionship are not strongly inviting to the man from the busy city, while another is at home in the depths of the forest. Incidents daily occur which add flavor to the routine work of the forester. He loves nature as few other professional men do, he finds pleasure in company with the trees and wildlife of the forest. His aesthetic nature grown more appreciative, yet he has not forgotten that his is the life of work and good hard work.

You are probably still riding your motorcycle. You have learned to ride it through sand by this time. You do not hear so distinctly the gurgling of the brooks, and the lowing of the kine on account of the hum of the motor, but you like to hear the hum of the motor now, if you know that it's sparking rightly. To the man who intends to make forestry a life work

simply because he likes birds and flowers and sunsets, "Don't." But if you feel that you can learn to enjoy the hum of the professional forester's motor, and will find enjoyment in hanging on like grim death on the sandy stretches, then "Go ahead."



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